

United States Senate

December 12, 2017

The Honorable Ben Carson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Carson:

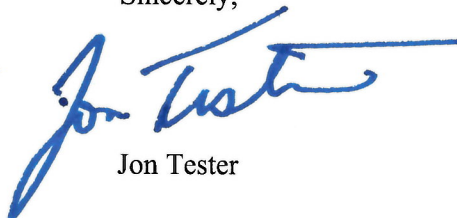
I write today with concerns about the 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report recently released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This report revealed that for the first time in nearly seven years homelessness has risen across the nation, with 17 out of every 10,000 Americans facing this dire circumstance. In Montana alone, the number of homeless is up 7.8 percent in the last year. At a time when our economy is recovering, it is very troubling to see a rising number of Montanans with no safe or warm place to call home. In light of these statistics, I encourage you to advocate for initiatives within HUD that help combat homelessness and promote affordable housing in the FY 2018 and FY 2019 appropriations bills. Your advocacy goes a long way in helping combat cuts to these important initiatives.

Embedded in these new statistics on homelessness, we have also seen the number of homeless veterans in Montana grow by 24 percent over the last year. As public servants, we must advocate and honor our commitment to those who have sacrificed everything to help protect this nation. Congress and the Administration must do everything we can to ensure that veterans facing homelessness have the resources they need to get back on their feet.

As you well know, affordable housing provides economic security for families empowering students to perform better in school, and it helps parents keep their jobs. Once they lose their homes, it is very difficult for folks to bounce back. Fortunately, HUD has a number of programs that help individuals do just that. Initiatives like the CDBG Grant Program, the HOME investment Partnership's Program, and the Interagency Council on Homelessness all help strengthen our communities and increase access to safe and affordable housing. And given the recent statistics, it is critical that now more than ever we continue to responsibly fund these programs. That is why I was so disappointed when the HUD budget request earlier this year suggested reducing and eliminating many of these important initiatives. Cuts like these will hinder HUD's ability to protect the most vulnerable households and help Montana families get ahead.

As Congress discusses FY 2018 funding levels in the coming weeks and as HUD prepares its FY 2019 budget request, I encourage you to address the rising rates of homelessness and advocate for these essential initiatives that help Montana families, veterans, and seniors. I appreciate your consideration of my request and I look forward to having continued conversations about how we can end homelessness across the nation.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester